

## Message Text

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44

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EURE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00 INRE-00

CIAE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01

PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 ACDA-05 TRSE-00 SAJ-01 SY-05 A-01

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FM AMEMBASSY ATHENS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 413

INFO USMISSION NATO IMMEDIATE

CINCUSNAVEUR IMMEDIATE

USCINCEUR IMMEDIATE

DIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE

USDOCOSOUTH IMMEDIATE

USNMR BRUSSELS IMMEDIATE

COMSIXTHFLT IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L ATHENS 6925

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, MILI, GR, US

SUBJECT: DEFENSE MINISTER AVEROFF ISSUES ADDITIONAL  
STATEMENT ON PHIBLEX 3A-76: FURTHER REACTIONS  
OF OPPOSITION PARTIES

REF: ATHENS 6892

1. AGAINST THE BACKGROUND OF THE CRITICAL STATEMENTS BY  
OPPOSITION LEADERS AND NEGATIVE PRESS COMMENTARY (REFTEL,  
THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE ISSUED AN ADDITIONAL CLARIFYING  
STATEMENT REGARDING PHIBLEX 3A-76 ON SEPTEMBER 9. THE  
TEXT OF THE STATEMENT FOLLOWS: "THE COMMOTION OVER  
ALLOWING A U.S. MARINE BATTALION TO HOLD A LANDING EXERCISE  
IN GYTHION (PELOPONNESE) IS TOTALLY UNJUSTIFIED AND  
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APPARENTLY STAGE-MANAGED. THE GOVERNMENT IS IN A BETTER

POSITION THAN ANYONE ELSE TO KNOW WHAT THE NATIONAL INTERESTS ARE, AND TO PROTECT THE COUNTRY'S HONOR. GREECE HAS NOT CEASED COLLABORATING WITH THE UNITED STATES IN THE DEFENSE SECTOR, AND THEREFORE CANNOT REFUSE HER PERMISSION FOR MILITARY EXERCISES SUCH AS HAVE BEEN CARRIED OUT FOR THE PAST 20 YEARS IN MANY EUROPEAN AND ESPECIALLY MEDITERRANEAN COUNTRIES. AS ALREADY ANNOUNCED, THE EXERCISE WILL BE OBSERVED BY GREEK ARMY OFFICERS WHO WILL GAIN VALUABLE EXPERIENCES FROM IT."

2. IN CONNECTION WITH THIS ANNOUNCEMENT, A GOVERNMENT SOURCE EXPLAINED THAT A SIMILAR EXERCISE WAS HELD LAST YEAR IN ITALY WHICH IS A FULL NATO MEMBER, IN FRANCE WHICH IS NOT A FULL NATO MEMBER, AND IN SPAIN WHICH DOES NOT BELONG TO NATO AT ALL. FURTHERMORE, IT WAS STRESSED, THE NATIONAL INTERESTS TO WHICH THE MINISTRY STATEMENT REFERRED ARE MANIFEST. GREECE HAS NOT CEASED BEING AN ALLY OF THE UNITED STATES AND THE NATIONAL INTEREST CALLED FOR THE ACCEPTANCE OF THE REQUEST.

3. IN ANSWER TO THIS LATEST DEFENSE MINISTRY STATEMENT, THE CENTER UNION/NEW FORCES PARTY (WHICH HAD NOT PREVIOUSLY COMMENTED ON THE PHIBLWS EXERCISE) ISSUED A STATEMENT CRITICIZING THE GOVERNMENT FOR NOT EXPLAINING HOW IT IS POSSIBLE TO PERMIT FOREIGN MILITARY EXERCISES IN GREECE DURING THIS CRITICAL TIME IN THE LIGHT OF GREECE'S WITHDRAWAL FROM THE MILITARY ARM OF NATO. IT SUGGESTED THAT THE GOVERNMENT IS POSSESSED BY THE PERSISTENT IDEA THAT IT HAS BEEN GIVEN CARTE BLANCHE BY THE GREEK PEOPLE TO DIRECT ITS AFFAIRS IN AN UNCONTROLLED MANNER WITHOUT FULLY INFORMING THE PEOPLE. THE STATEMENT FURTHER OBSERVED THAT THE DEFMIN STATEMENT, INSTEAD OF INFORMING THE PEOPLE, RATHER INCREASED ITS ANXIETIES AND ITS QUESTIONS. IT ASSERTED THAT THE GOVERNMENT CLAIM THAT GREEK OFFICERS WOULD PROFIT BY THE EXPERIENCE OF OBSERVING THE EXERCISE INDICATES COMPLETE CONFUSION ON THE PART OF THE GOVERNMENT AND ITS INABILITY TO SUBSTANTIATE ITS INEXPLICABLE DECISION.

4. ADDITIONALLY, THE LEADER OF THE UNITED DEMOCRATIC LEFT (EDA) ILIAS ILIOU CHARACTERIZED THE "LANDINGS--INTERVENTION" CONFIDENTIAL

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EXERCISE AS AN INFRINGEMENT ON THE NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE OF GREECE. IN REFERRING TO THE "NATIONAL INTEREST" WHICH, HE SAID, MINISTER OF DEFENSE AVEROFF INVOKED IN HIS STATEMENT, ILIOU STATED THAT THAT SAME NATIONAL INTEREST REQUIRES THE IMMEDIATE AND IMPERATIVE REVISION OF ALL THE BILATERAL GREEK-AMERICAN AGREEMENTS WHICH NOW CONSTITUTE VIOLATIONS OF NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE. HE TOO NOTED THAT THE NATIONAL INTEREST REQUIRES THE IMPLEMENTATION OF GREECE'S WITHDRAWAL

FROM THE MILITARY WING OF NATO "WHICH THE GOVERNMENT HAD PREVIOUSLY PROCLAIMED."

5. THE COMMUNIST PARTY-EXTERIOR IN A STATEMENT POINTED OUT THAT WHILE PRIME MINISTER CARAMANLIS HAD PROMISED THAT THERE WOULD BE A CHANGE IN POLICY TOWARD THE U.S. AND NATO, "NOW HE ADMITS THAT NOTHING IS CHANGED" --AND INDEED THIS IS THE REALITY.

6. ATHENS PRESS CONTINUES TO COVER PHIBLEX STORY--AGAIN ALONG PREDICTABLE LINES. ATHINAIKI (PAPANDREOU-PASOK SUPPORTER) SEPTEMBER 10 LEAD HEADLINE STATED "GREECE IS NOT A FIEF OF AMERICANS". APOYEVMATINI (CONSERVATIVE) PRESENTED ITS FRONT PAGE STORY IN FACTURAL MANNER INCLUDING A MAP OF THE EXERCISE AREA. TO VIMA (LIBERAL) GIVES PROMINENT PLAY TO THE CENTER UNION/NEW FORCES REPLY TO THE DEFMIN ANNOUNCEMENT WHILE KATHIMERINI (PRO-GOVERNMENT) HIGHLIGHTS THE AVEROFF STATEMENT.

7. AVGHI (COMMUNIST-INTERIOR) AND RIZOSPASTIS (COMMUNIST-EXTERIOR) CONTINUE TO CRITICIZE THE EXERCISE IN THEIR LEAD FRONT PAGE STORIES ON SEPTEMBER 11. AVGHI CARRIES A REPORT FROM TWO OF ITS REPORTERS O THE SPOT (APPARENTLY ONE OF THE FEW NESWPAPERS TO SO COVER THE EXERCISE). THESE REPORTERS WROTE THAT THEY APPROACHED A MARINE ON THE BEACH ND ASKED HIM WHETHER THE LANDING WAS A U.S. EXERCISE OR PART OF NATO'S DEEP EXPRESS. THE MARINE WAS REPORTED AS SAYING THE EXERCISE WAS TO PROVIDE FULLER TRAINING CAPABILITIES.

8. COMMENT: IN HIS CONVERSATIONS YESTERDAY WITH THE AMBASSADOR (REFTEL, MINISTER AVEROFF INDICATED HE PLANNED TO MEET THE CRITICISM OF THE GOVERNMENT'S APPROVAL OF PHIBLEX HEAD-ON AND TO PUT IT IN THE BROADER CONTEXT OF CONFIDENTIAL

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GREECE'S SECURITY INTERESTS. HE APPARENTLY OBTAINED PRIME MINISTER CARAMANLIS' APPROVAL TO DO SO. THE RESULT IS A CLEAR AND FORTHRIGHT STATEMENT OF GREECE'S CONTINUING CLOSE ALIGHMENT AND COOPERATION WITH THE US IN THE SECURITY FIELD--THE STRONGEST SUCH STATEMENT BY THE GREEK GOVERNMENT SINCE THE DETERIOR ATION IN US-GREEK RELATIONS AS A RESULT OF THE CYPRUS CRISIS.  
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